



18th Battalion Association

Windsor and Detroit Branch

MEMORIES

Every man who served in the Front Line for any length of time, whether he be an officer or in the ranks, had some unforgettable experience he would often recall during his lifetime. Some men had several and some of the experiences were much worse than others.

My unforgettable experience was tied in with Harold Ball and it all started near the close of a nice summer day. Just before midnight, two or three of us were sitting in the Bay, the other man standing guard. About an hour later, the enemy started to shell and when the shelling was intensified, the two Companies of the Eighteenth Battalion, who were in the line, were ordered to stand to, which we did for the rest of the night.

Just before daybreak one of our Platoon Officers came into the Bay and, during a casual conversation, stated that he believed an attack was imminent. We were well prepared for it, as we had extra bombs in every Bay and one of the Battalion machine guns was mounted in the Bay next to ours. I believe the other machine guns were further along the line. Every man knew exactly what he had to do if the red flare went off. It did go off just before 7:00 a.m. and in a moment, we were all on the parapet firing as rapidly as possible. I took a look at the German line which was about sixty yards away and all I could see were men in gray uniforms climbing over the top.

We were all tense as this would be our first close contact with the enemy. Within a matter of seconds, however, there was a withering machine gun fire from the rear, and the enemy had no chance. Those who were not hit were forced back into their trenches. I don't believe any of them advanced more than ten or fifteen yards. We were all ordered to continue to stand to as the attack would likely be repeated. It was, shortly after 9:00 a.m. The red flare again went off and, well, let me quote from the Official Canadian War Record of that day,

"The enemy attacked the Eighteenth Battalion on two occasions but were driven off. We had eight killed and twenty seven wounded. Several of our men were buried during the terrific bombardment."

Shortly after noon, Harold and I were standing together talking quietly when there was a loud explosion behind us and we both felt ourselves going up in the air. When I started to come to and found I couldn't move my arms or legs or get the dirt out of my mouth, I knew we were buried. It was an awesome feeling. Some time later I could hear them digging and in a short time we were both pulled from the slimy hole more dead than alive. Among the diggers were Rickert, Scarde, Bayliss, Tooke, and possibly others. I know that some of them are still with us. What a nice bunch they were. What happened to Harold and I was not unique as the same thing has happened to many other Canadian Soldiers. We were just fortunate that our friends were close enough to help or we might still be in that crater. It was quite an experience.

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